

A CLARIFICATION OF THE STATUS OF THE RED-CHESTED CUCKOO *CUCULUS SOLITARIUS* IN LOWLAND AREAS OF EAST AFRICA Howell, Msuya & Stuart (1980) documented the first records of the Red-chested Cuckoo *Cuculus solitarius* in coastal East Africa north of about 10°S. Based on the distribution of plots in Snow (1978), they concluded that there is no specimen from the coastal strip, and that it 'appears to be a highland species in East Africa'.

The statement in Britton (1980) that it visits coastal southeastern Tanzania between October and April is supported by fifteen specimens from Mikindani; three of these were detailed by Britton (1978), while Britton (in prep.) provides details of a further six. In addition to records from most highland areas of East Africa, there are published reports from various other localities at low and medium elevations, including the Bwamba lowlands of western Uganda at 700 m (Friedmann & Williams 1971) and Tsavo East National Park in eastern Kenya at about 600 m (Lack, Leuthold & Smeenk 1980). It might be mainly a seasonal visitor to these lowland areas, but it occurs in all months and probably breeds in the Siaya District of western Kenya at 1200-1500 m (unpublished pers. obs.).

Howell et al. (1980) regard the Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo *Cercococcyx montanus* as a suitable analogue, being most typically montane yet recorded at sea-level on occasion. In support of their argument they mentioned only the single specimen from coastal Kenya detailed by Britton (1977). It is worthwhile drawing attention to five specimens from coastal Tanzania at Mikindani (in the extreme southeast) and Soga (near Dar es Salaam), as well as specimens from various localities in the Uluguru Mountains as low as 400 m (Britton 1978 and in prep.). Britton & Zimmerman (1979) mentioned a freshly dead bird under a power-line at Watamu (near Malindi) on 30 October 1978, but they omitted to mention that it was extremely fat (and weighed 68.5 g). Available evidence suggests that both of these cuckoos are only seasonal visitors to the coastal strip.

## REFERENCES

- BRITTON, P.L. 1977. A Kenya record of *Cercococcyx montanus* at sea-level. *Scopus* 1: 23-24.
- 1978. The Andersen collection from Tanzania. *Scopus* 2: 77-85.
- (ed.) 1980. *Birds of East Africa*. Nairobi: EANHNS.
- (in prep.) Notes on the Andersen collection and other specimens from Tanzania housed in some West German museums.
- & ZIMMERMAN, D.A. 1979. The avifauna of Sokoke Forest, Kenya. *Journal of the East Africa Natural History Society and National Museum* 169: 1-15.
- FRIEDMANN, H. & WILLIAMS, J.G. 1971. The birds of the lowlands of Bwamba, Toro Province, Uganda. *Contributions in Science, Los Angeles* 211: 1-70.
- HOWELL, K.M., MSUYA, C.A. & STUART, S.N. 1980. The Red-chested Cuckoo *Cuculus solitarius* in coastal Tanzania. *Scopus* 4: 44.
- LACK, P.C., LEUTHOLD, W. & SMEENK, C. 1980. Check-list of the birds of Tsavo East National Park, Kenya. *Journal of the East Africa Natural History Society and National Museum* 170: 1-25.
- SNOW, D.W. (ed.) 1978. *An atlas of speciation in African non-passerine birds*. London: British Museum (Nat. Hist.).

P.L. Britton, Box 90163, Mombasa

Received 20 August 1980

*Scopus* 4: 71, September 1980